

Foundation for
Chiropractic Progress



**STEPPING SAFELY TO
PREVENT
INJURY**



According to the National Safety Council, “falls are one of the leading causes of unintentional injuries in the U.S.” In 2020 over **42,000 PEOPLE DIED IN FALLS** at home and at work and more than **6.8 MILLION PEOPLE WERE TREATED IN EMERGENCY ROOMS FOR FALL RELATED INJURIES**.¹ Globally that number increases to over 37 million falls annually that are severe enough to require medical attention each year. WHO cites falls as the second leading cause of unintentional injury deaths worldwide.²



Falls in the elderly population are particularly hazardous. Head injury or broken bones due to frailty puts seniors at increased risk, especially for hip fractures, and falls can initiate a slippery slope that results in increased morbidity, mortality and a loss of functional independence.³



Though many falls that people endure are not severe and do not cause significant injuries, it is estimated that **ONE OF EVERY FIVE FALLS IS SAID TO CAUSE A SERIOUS INJURY** such as harm to the head or a broken bone.⁴ In-between these two extremes we also find a danger zone where an injury may exist but symptoms from a fall injury or mild concussion may not manifest right away. These types of ‘temporarily hidden’ injuries are a cause for concern.

Because concussion and musculoskeletal symptoms may show up later, it is extremely pertinent that people seek care and monitoring after any slip and fall incident to avoid complications and optimize a swift and safe healing process. Ideally, however, the major goal in combating injuries from slips, trips and falls is prevention.



TIPS TO AVOID **SLIPS, TRIPS & FALLS**

Whether at home, at play or in the workplace, people of all ages can take steps to minimize the risks of fall-related injuries. Your doctor of chiropractic (DC) can assist you in evaluating your risks based on your activities and environment. Tips to avoid slips and falls start with your own body and then translate to keeping a keen outlook on your surroundings.

BODY AWARENESS

- **ENSURE IDEAL NUTRITION FOR BONE HEALTH**, including Vitamin D.

- **ENGAGE IN BONE DENSITY TESTING** before you have symptoms, especially if you have a family history of osteoporosis. Osteoporosis cannot be cured and early detection can help you take preventative steps for future health.

- **MAINTAIN STRENGTH AND BALANCE WITH TARGETED EXERCISES.** Tai Chi is a good example of exercise that will help people stay strong and keep equilibrium intact. Lower body strength is vital to balance.



- **ASK YOUR PHARMACIST TO REVIEW YOUR MEDICATIONS TO SEE IF ANY MIGHT MAKE YOU DIZZY OR SLEEPY.**

Include prescriptions and over-the-counter remedies. Use the information to limit your activity when taking them and to remind yourself to be extra cautious knowing those side effects could occur.

- **HAVE YOUR EYES CHECKED.** You want to ensure you see obstacles (like uneven sidewalks) before an accident can occur. Bifocals and progressive lenses can sometimes make things look closer or farther away than they really are. For activities such as walking, you may want to invest in a pair of glasses with only your distance prescription.⁵

- **PAY ATTENTION TO HOW YOU WALK.**

Dragging your feet or other gait issues may increase your risk for falls.

- **ENSURE YOU HAVE SHOES THAT FIT WELL.** High heels, new shoes or shoes that do not fit can predispose you to falls.



HOME SAFETY

- **REMOVE ITEMS IN WALKWAYS** that you could trip over including clutter, rugs or bubbled carpet.
- **USE RAILINGS** to provide stability whenever using stairs.
- **PLACE NON-SLIP MATS** in the bathtub and shower.
- **ADD GRAB BARS** inside and outside the bath/shower area and near the toilet.
- **ENSURE YOUR HOUSE IS WELL LIT** so that you can see potential hazards. Include ample night-lights in the hall and bathroom if you are prone to needing to get up at night.
- **KEEP ITEMS THAT YOU USE OFTEN IN CABINETS THAT CAN BE EASILY ACCESSED** (to help avoid the use of step stools or kitchen ladders).
- **CHECK COMMON PATHS FOR UNEVEN TERRAIN** so that you are aware of it and can fix it. The garage, sidewalks from the porch and path to the mailbox that may be taken daily are the first places to inspect.

ENVIRONMENTAL

UPDATES AT WORK AND BEYOND

- **BE AWARE OF ELECTRICAL CORDS, WIRES, EMPTY BOXES OR OTHER CLUTTER** that can be tripped on and arrange work spaces to keep these items from walkways.

- **PRACTICE AWARENESS ON SURFACES:** ice, snow, rain, wet spills or slippery cleaning products and use shorter steps and stabilization (a hand grip etc.).

- **WHEN USING A LADDER, ENSURE EXTENSIONS ARE FULLY LOCKED AND THAT LADDER LEGS ARE LEVEL ON A STABLE SURFACE.** Have a person near to help stabilize the equipment and you.

Never go over the load limit noted on a ladder and never lean or reach for something which can cause instability on a ladder.⁶

- **DON'T LIFT AND CARRY WEIGHTS OVER YOUR PERSONAL ABILITIES.**

Also, ensure that you still have a line of vision when carrying boxes or other loads.

- **WATCH FOR HOLES AND UNEVEN SURFACES** whether in a retail parking lot or on a park hiking trail.

- **ALWAYS BE CAREFUL AND USE THE HANDRAILS WHEN ENTERING, RIDING AND EXITING AN ESCALATOR.**

In an elevator, use the rail to steady yourself during sudden stops and starts.

- **INSIDE OF STORES, USING A SHOPPING CART** can provide helpful

steadiness even if you are just grabbing a couple of items.

- **ALWAYS WEAR PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT** when recommended for you (for example, a back brace for lifting or helmet when biking).



CHIROPRACTORS

Chiropractors can help you evaluate your individual risks for falling through targeted adjustments to maximize joint stability and function and can guide patients with options for exercise to support strength and balance. From nutrition and gait analysis to collaborating with other health professionals for special studies (like bone density testing), your chiropractic clinic is a first-stop resource to help you prevent injuries, and in the unfortunate case of a fall, is a primary care provider to assess and manage the result to optimize the healing process and get you back into action as soon as safely possible.



REFERENCES:

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